

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 ACDA-07 /080 W

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R 211515Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5320

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

SECDEF WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

USIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER//ECJ4/7

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3729

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MILI UR US CF CU CG AO

SUBJECT: THE SOVIETS AND THE INVASION OF ZAIRE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. OVER PAST FEW DAYS CENTRAL PRESS HAS CARRIED NUMEROUS TASS ARTICLES ON ZAIRIAN EVENTS BASED ON WESTERN PRESS REPORTS AND ON OFFICIAL STATEMENTS BY ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT. EMPHASIS IS TO DENY ANGOLAN INVOLEMENT AND TO CASTIGATE U.S. FOR INTERFERENCE IN WHAT IS PORTRAYED AS INTERNAL ZAIRIAN PROBLEM. ZAIRE EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY SEES SOVIET HAND BEHIND INVASION AND FEARS POSSIBLE MILITARY PRESSURE BY CONGO (B). EMBASSY ANALYSIS OF SOVIET ACTIONS AND MOTIVATION HAMPERED BY LACK OF EVIDENCE, BUT "BEST CASE" APPROACH INDICATES  
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AT LEAST SOVIET KNOWLEDGE OF BUILDUP AND ATTACK. REAL TEST OF SOVIET POLICY WILL COME WHEN OUTSIDE LOGISTICS SUPPORT PROVES NECESSARY, BUT SOVIETS WILL PROBABLY TRY HARD TO CONCEAL WHATEVER DIRECT ROLE THEY INTEND TO PLAY. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MARCH 17 SOVIET CENTRAL PRESS BEGAN TO PLAY TASS

WASHINGTON AND BRUSSELS ACCOUNTS EMPHASIZING U.S. AND  
BEGIAN MILITARY SUPPLY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAIRE.  
FRENCH HAVE BEEN TREATED RATHER LIGHTLY IN THIS REGARD,  
ALTHOUGH MARCH 21 PRAVDA HAS TASS LUANDA ITEM ON ANGOLAN  
FONMIN WARNING TO BELGIAN AND FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES IN  
LUANDA ON THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF THE "ARMED  
INTERFERENCE" OF BELGIUM AND FRENCE IN THIS REGION.  
MANY ARTICLES HAVE CITED U.S. PRESS (ESPECIALLY NYTIMES  
AND WASHINGTON POST) ON DANGER OF NEW ADMINISTRATION  
DRAWING U.S. INTO "RISKY CONFLICT" IN AFRICA RATHER THAN  
WORKING THROUGH OAU OR UN TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL SOLUTION  
TO PROBLEMS IN REGION. MARCH 18 CENTRAL PRESS CITED  
SECRETARY'S TESTIMONY ON HILL IN SUPPORT OF U.S. MILITARY  
ASSISTANCE AND, IN TENDENTIOUS WAY, CAST DOUBTS ON  
ACTUALITY OF INVASION OF ZAIRE FROM ABROAD. TASS  
WASHINGTON ARTICLE IN MARCH 20 KRASNAYA ZVEZDA ECHOES  
THIS THEME AND DESCRIBES CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN  
OVER U.S. INVOLVEMENT EXPRESSED BY SENATOR CLARK AND  
CONGRESSMAN BONKER (LATTER IMPLICITLY DESCRIBED GOZ  
AS "REPRESSIVE REGIME"). MOST ARTICLES IN CENTRAL  
PRESS CONTAIN COMMENTS DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT IDEA THAT  
ATTACKING FORCES CROSSED OVER FROM ANGOLA OR THAT THEY  
ARE SUPPORTED BY ANGOLA. MARCH 17-19 PRESS CITED  
ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN TO THIS EFFECT. MARCH 21  
PRAVDA HAS TASS BRUSSELS ITEM ON BELGIUN PRESS INTERVIEW  
WITH SON OF LATE TSHOMBE IN WHICH HE CLAIMED INSURGENTS  
WERE LED BY CONGOLESE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT AND  
DENIED THAT INSURGENT MOVEMENT HAD ANY RELATIONSHIP  
WITH CUBA OR SOVIET UNION. MARCH 19 PRAVDA "COMMENTATOR'S  
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COLUMN" BY V. VOLKOV DOES NOT DESCRIBE ZAIRIAN EVENTS  
DIRECTLY, BUT DOES EMPHASIZE SOVIET-ANGOLAN FRIENDSHIP  
TREATY AND SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY OF "REACTIONAY REGIMES"  
DIRECTED AGAINST ANGOLA.

3. IN RELATED PRESS COVERAGE ON ASSASSINATION OF  
CONGOLESE PRESIDENT NGOUABI, FIRST ACCOUNT IN MARCH 20  
PAPERS CITED BREZZAVILLE RADIO WHICH CHARACTERIZED  
ASSASSIN AS "AGENT OF IMPERIALISM." MARCH 21 PRAVDA  
QUOTED CONGOLESE PM GOMA ON "RESPONSIBILITY" OF INTER-  
NATIONAL IMPERIALISM FOR NGOUABI MURDER.

4. IN HIS MARCH 21 SPEECH TO 16TH TRADE UNION CONGRESS,  
CPSU GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV PUT "FOUL MURDERS" OF  
NGOUABI AND LEFTIST LEADER JUMBLATT IN  
CONTEXT OF EFFORTS BY FORCES OPPOSED TO RELAXATION  
OF INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS. IN SAME CONTEXT, BREZHNEV  
DECRIED "INTERFERENCE OF NATO MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE  
INTERNAL MILITARY CONFLICT IN ZAIRE AND THE NEW SLANDEROUS

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PRA."

5. ZAIRIAN EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY MAYO-BAYENGA NGOANGOR (A VETERAN OF 4 YEARS IN MOSCOW) TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 18, HIS EMBASSY WAS CONVINCED SOVIETS WERE INVOLVED IN PREPARATIONS AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT INVOLVED IN LAUNCHING KATANGAN ATTACK. HE SAID SOVIETS HAD COOLED TOWARD ZAIRIANS HERE ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO AFTER EMBARKING ON WHAT HAD APPEARED TO BE A GENUINE EFFORT TO IMPROVE SOVIET-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS MARKED BY THE SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO MOSCOW OF A GOZ TRADE DELEGATION IN EARLY DECEMBER. ZAIRIAN EMBASSY BEGAN TO GET WORRIED OVER COURSE OF PAST FEW WEEKS AS SOVIET PRESS REPEATED NETO'S STRIDENT ATTACK ON ALLEGED ZAIRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN CROSS BORDER RAIDS AND MILITARY PLAN "COBRA-77".

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6. NGOANGOR SAID SOVIETS WERE AVOIDING SUBJECT OF INVASION IN THEIR ROUTINE TALKS WITH ZAIRIANS HERE ON ONGOING MATTERS. A MORE NEGATIVE SIGN, HOWEVER, WAS SOVIET FAILURE TO ARRANGE AN OFFICIAL DELEGATION TO FLY IN FIRST AEROFLOT PLANE ON NEW MOSCOW-KINSHASA WEEKLY RUN (VIA VIENNA, TRIPOLI AND LAGOS) WHICH IS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 31. SOVIET TECHNICAL PERSONNEL HAVE RECEIVED THEIR VISAS, BUT ZAIRIAN EMBASSY IS BEGINNING TO DOUBT SOVIETS WILL ACTUALLY MAKE INAUGURAL FLIGHT AT THIS TIME.

7. NGOANGOR OPENLY WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF MILITARY PRESSURE ON ZAIRE BY CONGO (B). HE CITED AUGUST 1976 VISIT TO VMOSCOW OF CONGOLESE MILITARY-PARTY DELEGATION AND SAID HE HAD RECEIVED "HINTS" WITH REGARD TO OTHERWISE UNSPECIFIED MILITARY MOVES FROM THE CONGOLESE DEFENSE ATTACHE HERE.

8. NGOANGOR DID NOT BELIEVE PODGORNYY TRIP TO TANZANIA, ZAMBIA AND MOZAMBIQUE WOULD BE CLUDED BY EVENTS IN ZAIRE. THERE IS NO PROVED SOVIET INVOLVEMENT, HE SAID, SOVIETS WILL FALL BACK ON ANGOLAN PROTESTATION OF INNOCENCE AND, MOST IMPORTANT, SOVIETS ARE (A) ON SIDE OF ANGELS IN SUPPORT OF ZIMBABWE LIBERATION MOVEMENT, AND (B) IN A POSITION TO OFFER FRONT LINE STATES NEEDED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

9. COMMENT: DIFFICULT FOR EMBASSY TO ATTEMPT ANALYSIS OF SOVIET MOTIVATION UNTIL WE HAVE BETTER FIX ON SOVIET KNOWLEDGE OF AND INVOLVEMENT IN PREPARATION AND SUPPORT OF INVASION. GIVEN SOVIET-CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA AND STATE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOSE COUNTRIES, EMBASSY FINDS IT

IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE SOVIETS DID NOT KNOW OF PLANNED  
INVASION ALTHOUGH WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDNCE TO INDICATE  
PRECISELY WHAT THEIR ROLE, IF ANY, WAS. TEST OF SOVIET  
INVOLVEMENT MAY COME IF INVADING FORCE BEGINS TO BE  
PRESSED BY GOZ FORCES OR IF LOGISTICS REQUIREMENTS OF  
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INVADING FORCE EXCEED CAPABILITIES OF ANGOLANS. REGARD-  
LESS OF THE LEVEL OF SOVIET SUPPORT, IT IS PROBABLE  
THAT MOSCOW WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO AVOID BEING  
CAUGHT PROVIDING IT.  
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## Message Attributes

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